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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this monograph is to serve as a primer for practitioners on the foundational theories of adult learning. It begins with an explanation two lenses through which learning theory is viewed: behaviorism and constructivism. The next section defines andragogy and delineates Knowles's five assumptions about adult learners. This is followed by a critique of Knowles's assumptions of andragogy through the eyes of foreign-born adult learners that examines the historic, political, and sociocultural contexts that influenced Knowles. The paper then presents several perspectives on transformative learning theory, describing theoretical approaches and criticisms of the theory. The next chapter discusses definitions, history, philosophical underpinnings, models, and criticisms of self-directed learning. A chapter on critical and postmodern theory explains their historical development, underlying philosophical tenets, and the differences between them. The next chapter examines race and its intersection with class and gender as it applies to learning theory and African Americans' learning processes; it discusses the tenets of Afrocentricity and its role in adult education. The concluding section considers the future of learning theory in adult education. Contains 166 references. (SK)

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Adult Learning Theory

A Primer

Lisa M. Baumgartner
Ming-Yeh Lee
Susan Birden
Doris Flowers

Information Series No. 392

Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus OH 43210-1090

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Adult Learning Theory:

A Primer

Information Series No. 392

by

Lisa M. Baumgartner
Northern Illinois University

Ming-Yeh Lee
San Francisco State University

Susan Birden
SUNY-Buffalo State College

Doris Flowers
San Francisco State University

Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

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Foreword

The Center on Education and Training for Employment would like to thank the authors for their work in the preparation of this paper.

Lisa M. Baumgartner, who edited this paper and wrote several chapters, is an Assistant Professor in the Counseling, Adult and Higher Education Department at Northern Illinois University. She received an Ed.D. in Adult Education from the University of Georgia. Her research interests include adult learning, adult development, identity development, HIV/AIDS, qualitative research, and women's contributions to the field of adult education. She is a Cyril O. Houle Scholar and is currently researching Septima Clark's contributions to social justice adult education. She has presented work nationally and internationally and was elected to the Adult Education Research Conference Steering Committee in 2003, serving until 2005.

Ming-Yeh Lee is an Assistant Professor at the Center of Adult Education and the Equity and Social Justice in Education Program at San Francisco State University. She received an Ed.D. and Women's Studies Graduate Certificate from the University of Georgia. Her research interests include adult learning, adult immigrant students, and issues of race, class, and gender in adult education. Dr. Lee is the recipient of an outstanding teaching award and a national research award. She has presented at international conferences and published in the areas of adult immigrant students, adult learning and equity, and social justice in education.

Susan Birden is Assistant Professor in adult education at SUNY-Buffalo State College. She received a Ph.D. in Philosophical, Historical and Social Foundations with a concentration in Adult Education from the University of Oklahoma. Prior to obtaining her doctorate, Susan received bachelor's and master's degrees in music and a Master's in Business Administration. Her major research interests include postmodern philosophy especially in regard to gender and sexuality. She has presented her work at national philosophy conferences and adult education conferences.

Doris Flowers is an Associate Professor in the College of Education at San Francisco State University where she also serves as the co-coordinator of the Center for Adult Education and the Equity and Social Justice in Education Program. She has been instrumental in developing the new Master of Arts degree concentration that focuses on issues of equity and social justice in education. She has taught at Purdue University, the University of Virginia, Howard University, and the University of the District of Columbia. She received her Ph.D. in education with a focus on language and communication from the University of Virginia in 1991. She is a speech-language pathologist by profession and has worked in various settings with adults and children. She has conducted research focusing on an African-centered perspective in language and literacy in adult learning and has taught in the areas of race, class, language, gender, education policy, and African-centered perspectives in teaching and learning.

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Adult Learning Theory:
The Basics

by
Lisa M. Baumgartner

The word "theory" or any of its variations causes reactions. Mine was fear. As a new doctoral student in adult education, I heard a seasoned student mention the words "theoretical framework" in conjunction with the word "dissertation." I thought, "'Theoretical' sounds awfully close to 'theory.' If I have to figure out one of those and *write* about it, I may as well just pack my bags and head back to Minnesota." Fortunately, these concepts were explained in the course of my doctoral study! Although the word "theory" has been defined more narrowly, for the purposes of this monograph we have chosen Merriam and Caffarella's (1999) definition: "A theory is a set of interrelated concepts that explain some aspect of the field in a parsimonious manner" (p. 267). The adult learning theories discussed include andragogy, transformative learning, self-directed learning, and critical and postmodern thought and may also be referred to as "a set of assumptions" (in the case of andragogy) or a perspective (in the case of critical and postmodern theory).

My co-authors and I recognize that the adult learning theories presented reflect U.S. perspectives. We further understand that a plethora of material exists on each theory presented. So, why write *another* publication concerning these theories? The purpose of this monograph is to serve as a *primer* for practitioners in adult education. It is not intended to replace or expand current knowledge about these theories but instead to focus on the origins, tenets, and criticisms of the foundational theories of adult learning in addition to providing readers with articles that challenge the assumptions made in White, Western adult learning theory. In the next section, we explain two lenses through which learning theory is viewed—behaviorism and constructivism. Next are presented a thumbnail sketch and rationale for the inclusion of each chapter, followed by a conclusion.

Looking at Learning Theory through Two Lenses: Behaviorism and Constructivism

Learning theory can be divided into the schools of behaviorism and constructivism. Behaviorists assert that learning can be known only through observation (Watson 1930). People's behavior is a collection of habits (ibid.). Individuals learn responses through positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement (ibid.). Positive reinforcement *increases* the likelihood that the immediately preceding behavior will be repeated (Shaffer 1994). For example, if a boy receives praise (an example of positive reinforcement) for helping his mother prepare a meal, he is likely to repeat the action. In contrast, negative reinforcement occurs when a desired action results in the cessation of an unpleasant stimulus (Shaffer 1994). When a girl turns off her alarm clock, she receives negative reinforcement. Punishment is a third kind of reinforcement. Instead of *preceding* the response as in the case of negative reinforcement, it *follows* the response and decreases the chance of the behavior recurring. Scolding is an example of punishment.

Since behavioristic teachers see people as a collection of habits (Watson 1930), they develop good habits in their students through drills. Teachers may use programmed learning to teach and reinforce fundamental skills. For example, music teachers may use an individualized computer program to teach flute fingerings. The program asks a student to choose the correct fingering for the note "G." If the student answers correctly, the next frame in the program says, "Excellent job!" which is a form of positive reinforcement. If the learner is incorrect, he or she may be prompted to pick another answer.

In contrast, constructivists believe that learning is a search for meaning. Knowledge is not simply "out there" to be attained; it is *constructed* by the learner. For example, a woman may reflect years later on her junior high band experiences and realize that these experiences did not occur in a vacuum, but were influenced by the context in which she learned. She may recognize that her race, class, and gender influenced the treatment received in the classroom.

To arrive at this new meaning, people create internal cognitive structures to organize their world. Learning is achieved through assimilation and accommodation. People *assimilate* information when they add it to an existing cognitive structure (Miller 1993). They apply something they know to a new event. For example, if a music student knows how to count quarter notes, she takes that knowledge and learns how to count sixteenth notes. *Accommodation* requires that the cognitive structure needs to be created or completely reorganized (ibid.). It's a true "mind stretch." For example, a person who knew how to read and write only English would use accommodation to learn how to read and write Japanese because it involves three very unfamiliar writing systems that require formation of a new structure. Constructivist instructors would provide opportunities for students to analyze facts and come to a new understanding of the material though discussion and critical thought. The theories presented come from this constructivist framework.

A Map to the Monograph

Two of the six adult learning theory chapters examine andragogy in depth. We thought andragogy warranted this attention for two reasons. First, since the field's inception, often marked by Lindeman's (1989) publication of ***The Meaning of Adult Education*** in 1926, the fledgling field sought adult learning theories. Andragogy, Malcolm Knowles's (1970, 1980) theory/set of assumptions about adult learners, filled that void. After more than 3 decades, the theory still generates discussion. Second, we wanted to include marginalized voices in the analysis and critique of andragogy since it has been criticized for lacking application to marginalized populations because it does not consider the sociocultural context.

Baumgartner's chapter defines andragogy, delineates Knowles's (1980) five assumptions about adult learners, discusses its application to different settings, and mentions some criticisms of the theory including the need for a researchable definition as well as its inattention to the sociocultural context. Lee's chapter explores the importance of context in the creation of theory as well in learners' lives. She critiques Knowles's assumptions of andragogy through the eyes of foreign-born adult learners. Lee provides a critical analysis of "the specific historic, political, and sociocultural contexts [in which] Knowles was situated [and how that] affected [his] construction of andragogy" (p. 12).

Transformative learning theory, the second adult learning theory discussed, appeared in the early 1980s. Although others such as Daloz (1999), Boyd (1989) and Freire (2000) wrote about transformative learning, Mezirow's (1981) conceptualization of the theory led to an explosion of research in the 1980s and 1990s. The theory spawned its own conference, which has been held annually since 1998, and papers in the Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings in the late 1990s and early 21st century speak volumes for adult educators' interest in the theory (Petit and Francis 2000; Rose 1999). Baumgartner presents several perspectives on transformative learning theory. This chapter explains how transformative learning differs from other types of learning, various theoretical approaches to transformative learning, and criticisms of the theory. In addition, Baumgartner explores Cranton's (1994, 1996, 2000) work on fostering transformative learning in the classroom.

The third theory, self-directed learning, enjoyed a long history of development. The focus migrated from descriptions of self-directed learning (Houle 1961; Tough 1971) toward measuring students' "self-directed learning readiness" (Guglielmino 1977) and critiques of the measurement scale (Field 1991; Long and Agyekum 1983; Mourad and Torrance 1979). Next, interest seemed to shift to the occurrence of self-directed learning in a variety of settings including colleges (Sheckley 1985) and health sciences education (Williams et al. 1995). Recent research centers on self-directed learning in the workplace (Bova and Kroth 2001; Confessore et al. 1996; Straka 1999). Baumgartner's chapter provides definitions of self-directed learning, a brief history, and philosophical underpinnings to the theory and introduces models of self-directed learning as well as criticisms.

The fields of women's studies and social foundations of education embraced and used critical and postmodern theories as lenses of analysis before their recent widespread use in adult education. Those seeing the world through a critical or postmodern lens view knowledge, power, and learning differently. Critical theorists believe knowledge "is a rational product of human interests" that occurs through critical reflection whereas postmodernists believe that learning happens when people deconstruct knowledge (Kilgore 2001, p. 59).

Adult educators' use of critical and postmodern theories has risen in recent years. Stalker (2003) examined women's craft work as an act of defiance through a critical lens. Critical theory framed a study on race and adult education (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2000). Tisdell (1995) advanced a poststructual feminist pedagogy model, and Usher, Bryant, and Johnston (1997) explored adult education in a postmodern world.

Birden's chapter on critical and postmodern theory explains the historical development of critical theory and postmodern theory, the philosophical tenets behind these theories, and the differences between them. Birden notes that these theories have had a great impact on adult learning and indeed upon the educational process, which includes learning, teaching, and the curriculum. She posits that the theories seek answers to such questions as: Can knowledge be measured using objective standards or is some knowledge unquantifiable? Should education develop the individual potentials of students or should it aim at ensuring that all students know standard information? Her viewpoint examines critical theory through the eyes of educational foundations. We believe that this approach would give practitioners a solid understanding of the basis of the theories as well as the differences between the critical and postmodern thought.

Flowers's piece titled "An Afrocentric View of Adult Learning Theory" completes the monograph and provides a much-needed perspective on adult learning theory in general. Her chapter examines race and its intersection with class and gender as it applies to learning theory and African Americans' learning processes. She delineates how slavery informed African American adults' learning and discusses the tenets of Afrocentricity and its role in adult education.

Conclusion

This monograph explains the origins, tenets, and criticisms of foundational adult learning theories/perspectives including andragogy, transformative learning theory, self-directed learning, and the critical and postmodern perspectives. It is not intended to expand knowledge on the theories but to serve as a primer for adult educators. We recognize that these theories were created in a White, male, middle-class context and seek to move beyond a reproduction of this perspective to include much-needed voices on the application of andragogy to immigrant learners as well as adult learning theory from an Afrocentric perspective.

Andragogy:
A Foundational Theory/ Set of Assumptions

by
Lisa M. Baumgartner

Americans Laura, age 12, and Sarah, 30, attend a community education course titled "How to Navigate Japanese Culture during an Extended Stay." Laura's parents will teach English at Tokushima University in Tokushima, Japan. Laura will attend an international school where the language of instruction is English. Laura's knowledge of Japanese culture comes from attendance at school culture days where Japanese food and traditional dress were presented. Sarah will work in Tokyo as a foreign correspondent. Last year, she spent a month in Thailand as a foreign correspondent and enjoyed the assignment so much that she asked to be assigned to another Asian country. Both individuals want to know more about Japanese culture. The instructor asks what they expect to learn. Laura says she wants to learn how to get along with her Japanese peers. Sarah indicates her need to know Japanese cultural etiquette both outside and inside her workplace. According to andragogy's assumptions, Laura and Sarah may learn differently because one is a child and the other is an adult.

This seminal theory/set of assumptions has generated much research and discussion. Andragogy's critiques notwithstanding, Knowles' assumptions about adult learners supply a basis for the field of adult education by stating differences between adults and children. In this chapter I present basic information about andragogy including a history of the word, the five andragogical assumptions, criticisms, a new model of andragogy, and andragogy's application to different settings

Andragogy: Definitions and Assumptions

Eduard Lindeman's publication of ***The Meaning of Adult Education*** in 1926 (Lindeman 1989) marked the beginning of adult education as a field, and educators began to contemplate how adult learning differed from learning in childhood (Merriam 2001). Adult educators wanted their own unique adult education knowledge base (ibid.). When Knowles (1970) introduced "andragogy" and unveiled his assumptions about adult learners, the fledgling field initially embraced andragogy and later criticized it.

The term andragogy "is based on the Greek word *aner* (with the stem *andr-)* meaning 'man not boy'" (Knowles 1980, p. 42). German teacher Alexander Kapp coined the word in 1833 to describe Plato's idea that adults continue to learn in adulthood (Davenport and Davenport 1985; Draper 1998). "Andragogy" fell into disuse until the early 1920s when Eugene Rosenstock, a German social scientist charged with workers' education, realized that adult workers needed to be taught in a different way from children (Savícevíc 1999). European adult educators used the term in the 1950s and Malcolm Knowles popularized it in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Zmeyov 1998).

Knowles defines andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" in contrast with pedagogy, which concerns helping children learn (Knowles 1984, p. 43). Knowles' andragogical model incorporates five assumptions. First, learners move from "being dependent personalities toward being...self-directed" (Knowles 1980, pp. 44-45). Adults may be independent, self-directed people in other areas but may initially exhibit a "teach me" attitude because of previous school experiences (Knowles 1990). Therefore, teachers must introduce learning experiences that move the adult learner from being teacher dependent to being self-directed (ibid.).

Andragogy's second assumption is "Adults come to an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths" (Knowles 1990, p. 59). Laura and Sarah want to know more about Japanese culture. Because Sarah is an adult, she has more life experiences and a different quality of experiences to relate to course materials than Laura. The course instructor needs to tie Laura and Sarah's respective experiences to course materials using discussions, simulations, and case studies to promote learning (Knowles 1990).

Third, the timing of learning activities is related to developmental tasks (Knowles 1990). For example, when Sarah enters her company's Japanese headquarters, she is probably more interested in learning job expectations and workplace culture than knowing about the history of the company or retirement plans (Knowles 1980). Instructors should plan activities that are relevant and of interest to the learner.

Fourth, Knowles says that adult learning is problem centered rather than subject centered (Knowles 1980). Foreign correspondent Sarah needs to learn social etiquette and cultural rules to function well in her job. According to Knowles, Sarah would be more impatient than 12-year-old Laura with a course that does not address her needs.

Finally, adults are internally rather than externally motivated to learn (Knowles 1980). Knowles asserts that Sarah attends class because she wants to learn whereas Laura is externally motivated. Perhaps Laura's father promised to buy her a present if she took the course.

Criticisms of Andragogy

Since the popularization of andragogy, scholars have asked these questions: What is andragogy and to whom does it apply? Do some or all of the assumptions apply to children? Are its assumptions too simplistic? Does andragogy ignore the learning context? (See the third and seventh chapters for further critiques of andragogy as it applies to people of color and immigrants.) This section presents and briefly elaborates on these criticisms of andragogy.

Andragogy: A Theory or Set of Assumptions for Whom?

Adult educators wrestle with the definition of andragogy: Is it a theory or set of assumptions? Hartree (1984) asks whether Knowles' theory is one of teaching or learning since it is seen as a theory of learning but also referred to as a theory of teaching. She adds that it cannot be considered a philosophy because it is not grounded in a philosophical approach nor can it be considered a theory "because it lacks a coherent discussion of the different dimensions of learning" (p. 209). St. Clair (2002) believes andragogy is necessary knowledge for the field but does not consider it an adult learning theory because it does not "[explain] how and why people learn" (p. 2). If approached as a set of assumptions, it can be a starting point for educators desiring a more humanistic approach to adult education (ibid.).

Scholarly debates about the classification of andragogy and its application to children or adults occurred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s. McKenzie (1977) says the child/adult debate results from philosophical differences. Those who believe children are "existentially different" from adults (p. 277) surmise that children's education is different and that andragogy is a brilliant idea. Others believe that humans are educated the same and andragogy is just jargon and not science.

Perhaps because of the flurry of criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, andragogy's classification and its application to different populations evolved for Knowles. In ***The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy*** (1970) Knowles suggested that andragogy is a learning theory and technology that primarily applied to adults. In ***The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*** (1980), Knowles stated: "I don't see andragogy as an ideology at all, but a system of assumptions about learners that needs to be tested out for different learners in different situations" (p. 59). Regarding andragogy's application to children, Knowles said that pedagogy (teacher-centered learning) and andragogy (learner-centered learning) existed on a continuum. The learning situation and the learner determine the method used. Although he indicated andragogy could apply to children, his writing seem to indicate that he believed his set of assumptions are more appropriate for adults.

Andragogy's Assumptions: On a Continuum?

Knowles' (1980) idea that andragogy's assumptions were on a continuum failed to pacify his critics who argued that *some* assumptions of andragogy are on a continuum (such as a dependent self-concept versus an independent self-concept) whereas *others* (such as whether the learning is subject or problem centered) are not (Cross 1981). Delahaye, Limerick, and Hearn (1994) believed that the idea of a one-dimensional continuum was simplistic. These authors reported that Christian's (1982) Student Orientation Questionnaire, which measures students' andragogical and pedagogical orientation, was administered to first-year and third-year university students. Students fit in one of *four* categories. Learners scored high or low in both categories or high in one category and low in the other. Low Andragogy/High Pedagogy people were highly teacher dependent whereas those high in both wanted a mixture of both methods. Learners who scored high in andragogy and low in pedagogy wanted to direct their own learning but desired some support. Those low on both measures wanted to learn completely on their own.

Andragogy's Need for a Researchable Definition

Rachal (2002) indicates that andragogy's lack of a research definition leads to mixed research results. He reviewed 19 experimental and quasi-experimental studies on andragogy completed between 1984 and 2001 and found mixed results. For example, Anaemena's (1985) investigation of the effect of andragogical (adult) versus pedagogical (child) methods of instruction upon the cognitive achievement of learners in basic electronics in three Nigerian technical colleges found no statistically significant differences between method of instruction used and score outcomes. In contrast, a study that examined the use of andragogy-based instructional methods (such as peer helping groups) in conjunction with traditional lecture methods resulted in statistically significant higher scores for algebra students than those who received the lecture alone (Hornor 2001).

Rachal (2002) offers seven criteria for a researchable definition of andragogy. First, researchers should create learning situations in which the learner is internally motivated to learn and is a voluntary participant. Second, only adult learners should participate in studies and "adults" should be defined as "learners who have assumed the social and culturally defined roles characteristic of adulthood and who perceive themselves to be adult, or...learners who have achieved an age, such as 25" (p. 230). Third, learning activities should be designed in collaboration *with* the participant or primarily *by* the participant. Fourth, if the goal of the "andragogical learning experience [is] competence, the andragogy researcher must examine achievement" (p. 221). Rachal advises that performance evaluation is a direct way of assessing learning. For people engaged in an activity for the sake of learning, perhaps a self-report questionnaire on perceived learning would be appropriate. Fifth, learner satisfaction should be integral to all studies. Further, the learning environment should be psychologically and physically comfortable. Last, technical issues such as the random assignment of subjects to groups and having an adequate number of participants should be addressed.

Andragogy's Lack of Attention to the Cultural Context

Scholars believe that Knowles focuses on the individual learner and ignores the impact of sociocultural factors on learners (Flowers in this volume; Grace 1996; Lee in this volume). (See chapter three in this volume for a detailed critique of andragogy as it applies to foreign-born learners.) The authors recognize Knowles' inattention to the cultural context of the learner. Grace (1996) says that Knowles presents a descriptive technique that is only superficially grounded in philosophy and has not critically examined andragogy. He suggests that Knowles' conception of andragogy ignores marginalized groups' struggles and instead supports the status quo by "satisfying the economic agendas of business and industry" (p. 388). Grace continues: "Organizational culture and social structures and relations impact on individual freedom. The individual cannot be

seen as the isolated and insulated self whom Knowles defines as an autonomous self-directed learner" (p. 390).

Knowles's Model Revised: The Andragogy in Practice Model

In an effort to break andragogy from its individualistic roots, Holton, Swanson, and Naquin (2001), advance a model that "applies andragogy more systematically across multiple domains of adult learning practice" (p. 129). Their model helps teachers identify whether the andragogical assumptions fit the learner. The model consists of three rings. The outer ring shows the goals and purposes for learning or the learning outcomes, which fit into three general categories: "*individual, institutional, or societal growth*" (italics in the original, p. 129). For example, the authors indicate that adult literacy programs may help individuals to achieve a goal (an individual goal), may improve company performance (an institutional goal), or may help low-income individuals to improve their economic situation (a societal goal).

The middle ring and inner ring complete the model. The middle ring displays individual and situational differences that affect the learning process and "the practice of andragogy" (Holton, Swanson, and Naquin 2001, p. 132). Situational differences include the learners' previous experiences and cultural factors. Cognitive differences such as learning styles and personality differences such as how learners cope with anxiety are examples of individual differences. The inner ring contains andragogy's core adult learning principles.

Teachers decide whether the assumptions of andragogy fit the learner. Next, instructors assess individual and situational differences such as the subject matter, the individual learners' learning styles and situational differences to determine how they would affect the core assumptions. Similarly, teachers consider the goals and purposes of learning (individual, institutional, and societal) (Holton, Swanson, and Naquin 2001).

How Does Andragogy Work in the Real World? Andragogy's Application to Different Populations and Settings

Until now, the discussion of andragogy has focused on its assumptions and shortcomings. So, how does it work in the "real" world? Travis (1985) considered the application of andragogical principles to developmentally challenged individuals, special education graduates, and those physically challenged as young adults or older adults. He concluded that developmentally challenged individuals' experiences should be used in their learning and that they can become increasingly self-directed. Their learning is problem centered and it focuses on learning life skills and vocational skills (ibid.).

Travis discovered that special education graduates and those who become physically challenged in adulthood have different learning needs. Special education graduates generally had more life experiences with disability, which assisted them in future learning, and they possessed an earlier focus on their "need to know" especially if they attended vocational programs (ibid.). In contrast, those who became disabled in adulthood needed to learn how to live with their disability, which required individualized instruction based on their disability.

Price and Shaw (2000) applied two of Knowles' assumptions about adult learners to those with learning disabilities. They agreed that professionals should acknowledge the experiences of adults with learning disabilities. For example, when professionals obtain a client's history, they should use a learner-centered approach. Instead of using past records to devise a treatment plan, the client should be asked such questions as

"What problems do you want to address while you are here?" and "Where do you want to be five years from now?" (Price and Shaw 2000, p. 197). They agreed also that adult learners are problem centered. The learner and instructor should be partners in planning and implementing solutions to learners' problems.

Burge (1988) discussed andragogy's application to distance education. She believed that the learner-centered approach would "contribute to academic rigor of online courses" (p. 6). She encouraged distance educators to tap into learners' experiences and to promote knowledge application by assigning learners projects and case studies. Burge stated that teachers should help learners see connections between theory and practice. Gibbons and Wentworth (2001) agreed that, because adult learners need to know why they are learning something before they learn it (Knowles 1990) and adults have a different quality and quantity of experiences than children (ibid.), then online teachers/facilitators should generate meaningful online dialogue through discussion questions that promoted analysis and synthesis (Gibbons and Wentworth 2001).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced learners Laura, age 12, and Sarah, age 30. Their experiences illustrated Knowles' five assumptions. Critiques of andragogy included the debate over andragogy's status as a theory or set of assumptions, andragogy's application to children, and the debate as to whether the assumptions are on a continuum. Rachal (2002) provided a researchable definition of andragogy and a new andragogical model that incorporated the impact of society on the learner. Last, you, the reader learned about andragogy's application to different settings including developmentally and physically challenged persons and individuals with learning disabilities, and andragogy's use in distance education.

Andragogy provided a set of assumptions for the fledgling field of adult education. It continues to produce research and discussion. You, the reader, should see how andragogy's five assumptions apply to yourself, your learners, and the setting in which you learn and/or teach. Ponder andragogy's criticisms and join the debate!

A Critical Analysis of Andragogy: The Perspective of Foreign-Born Learners

by
Ming-Yeh Lee

The preceding chapter introduced andragogy's five andragogical assumptions, which describe the distinctive characteristics of adult learners with particular focus on learner's self-concept, role of life experience, learning readiness, orientation to learning, and learning motivation. The chapter also briefly mentioned Grace's (1996) work, which points out Knowles' lack of discussion of the role contexts play in shaping the learners and the learning process. This chapter explores andragogy's inattention to the role of context in more depth. The role of context needs to be defined before addressing the larger question of andragogy's applicability to foreign born learners.

The Role of Context

Generally speaking, context is defined in terms of the total experiences and activities engaged in by members of various social groups. More than just a geographic space, it encompasses the biographic, interpersonal, political, historical, and sociocultural settings in which individuals are socialized, shaped, and situated and in which they interact. Contextual impact usually comprises the diverse and intersecting influences that come from one's race, class, gender, nationality, communities, and the larger political and sociocultural milieu. Context is hereby characterized as dynamic, changing, and polyrhythmic (Alfred 2002; Sheared 1994). However, the only type of contextual impact that Knowles implies in andragogy is learners' life experiences and the developmental tasks associated with learners' social roles; he does not clarify how people's multiple contexts and identities may actually affect their views of learning and ways of engagement in the learning process.

It is notable that Knowles based his set of assumptions on his work with participants in mostly formal adult education programs as well as the theories prevalent in the 60s and 70s (Knowles and Associates 1984). Further, the literature demonstrates that for the past 3 decades learners in formal education settings are predominantly "White, middle class, employed, younger and better educated" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 71). In other words, Knowles has drawn his assumptions from a specific segment of the population. What has been left out from his theoretical framework are women, people of color, working-class adults, adult immigrant learners, and other marginalized groups whose experiences are often ignored in adult learning settings.

Being an adult immigrant learner, I often compared my own learning experiences with this prevalent adult learning model. For me, the approval and guidance given by my instructor, sometimes were more critical than my own internal motivation. Instead of feeling self-directed, I often felt lost when my instructors focused too much on group discussion or did not lecture. From time to time, I asked myself: To what extent does andragogy mirror my learning experience as an immigrant adult learner?

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the applicability of andragogy to adult immigrant learners, who were socialized in relatively different contexts and whose ways of viewing teaching and learning may or may not be compatible with those andragogy appears to characterize. Questions this critique aims to address include: How did the specific historic, political, and sociocultural contexts in which Knowles was situated influence his construction of andragogy? What are the ways in which contexts impact adult learners and their learning process? Being heavily affected by one's contexts, what characteristics would adult immigrant learners demonstrate? To what extent does andragogy capture the characteristics of adult immigrant learners?

Although critically examining the influence of the context on the adult immigrants' learning experiences, I do not intend to ignore intragroup differences among this group. Nor do I imply that all individuals born and raised in the United States view learning the same way and hence are well represented by andragogy. Both inter- and intragroup differences do exist within and between the groups of U.S.-born learners as

well as adult immigrants. Like their U.S.-born counterparts, adult immigrants represent a culturally diverse population, with each of the groups coming from a unique sociocultural, political, economic, and historical background. Rather than emphasizing the dichotomy between U.S.-born and immigrant learners, this chapter aims to provide contextualized ways of looking at adult learning assumptions by incorporating adult immigrants' learning experiences, the experiences that are significantly shaped by their countries of origin.

The Contextual Impact on Learning

Although more writers believe that contexts play a significant role in how we view our selfhood and learning (Clark and Wilson 1991; Jarvis 1992; Pratt 1991), andragogy has been criticized for being grounded in the psychological tradition of adult learning literature, in which learning is usually described as occurring only internally, regardless of one's situation or background (Caffarella and Merriam 2000). Andragogy assumes adult learners are people who are internally motivated, goal oriented, and self-directed and that adults function in the learning settings apart from the constraints and impediments of their circumstances.

As a result, Pratt (1993) charges that andragogy is unreflectively affected by the dominant ideology of individualism and overemphasizes the power of "human agency" (p. 18). He elaborates, "We are presented with a portrait of adult learners largely separate from their cultural and historical contexts, capable of controlling and directing their learning and expected to develop according to their own idiosyncratic paths or potential" (p. 17). Pratt (1993) further points out that Knowles gives primacy to a learner's autonomy over the authority and expertise of the instructor because the instructor's control and authority might prevent the learner from further advancement. By highlighting human agency and autonomy over social structure and instructor authority, Pratt believes that Knowles does not adequately account for the powerful influence of dynamic contexts in which the learners interact. Especially when it comes to the experiences of immigrant adult learners, his "decontextualized" way of visualizing learning limits our understanding of a more comprehensive and complex learning process. Like Pratt, many have argued for a more contextualized approach to characterizing learning process (Alfred 2002; Clark and Wilson 1991; Guy 1999; Jarvis 1992). The following studies provide empirical data to illustrate how, in effect, the polyrhythmic contexts affect one's learning process.

Hvitfeldt (1986) investigated the impact of cultural contexts on newly immigrated Hmong adults' learning experience. She suggested that being socialized in a preindustrial and preliterate society profoundly affected Hmong adults' interactive behaviors among themselves and with their instructors in the classroom. Observation of their behaviors evidently revealed their need for specific instructional directions, their respect and submissive attitude toward the instructors, and their collective interactive pattern. The cultural contexts in which they were once socialized continued to shape their learning behaviors even when the physical contexts in which they engaged had shifted.

Pratt's study (1991) compared and contrasted the ways in which the cultural, historical, and sociopolitical contexts of the United States and Mainland China formulated contrasting conceptions of "selfhood." The American selfhood appears to be reflective of the prevailing individualism in the United States, where the "naturally endowed" individual rights are believed to take precedence over society; thus, individual autonomy should be protected, uniqueness accepted, and experience respected. This selfhood appears to be highly compatible with the individuality portrayed in andragogy, manifested in the hegemonic ideology of the dominant society.

In contrast, the socialization process in China tends to emphasize conformity, obedience, and the significance of valuing the collective whole over the individual. Individuals are expected to accommodate others, show self-restraint, and subordinate to the interests of the group.

Intertwined with this group-oriented selfhood is the tendency to respect authority and to conform to hierarchy and order, determined by age, seniority, and gender. Within such a hierarchical context, the role of teacher is considered a noble position and demands unquestioning respect from students. An obedient attitude toward teachers and knowledge is usually marked by an absence of questioning and critique of instructors in the classroom. Thus, when adult educators attempt to allow their students more freedom for self-evaluation, selecting assignments or even critiquing the authorities, the instructors often encounter some degree of resistance.

Lee's study (1999) exploring the cultural impact on the process of meaning-making as perceived by Taiwanese Chinese immigrants demonstrated the significance of the sociocultural contexts in shaping the informal learning process. The research participants identified major Chinese cultural values—respecting authority, maintaining harmony, valuing study and degrees, and putting men above women—that have shaped their meaning-making process. These cultural values intersected and permeated every component of the meaning-making process, including the learners and the contexts in which the interpretation took place. Even though most of the life dilemmas the learners recalled occurred in the United States, their previous cultural contexts still permeated the interpretation process. In other words, the learners and their engagement in the entire meaning-making process were culturally and contextually constructed.

Alfred's study (2003) explored the learning experiences of Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women in postsecondary institutions. Alfred, serving as both researcher and participant, interviewed 15 individuals in this qualitative inquiry. The findings revealed that culture, contexts, and early schooling socialization in their country of origin significantly influenced these adult immigrants' learning experiences in the United States. Socialized in a British education system, these women became silent learners who preferred learning through lectures and written exercises to talking in class. To voice their critique in class, to challenge the power of the instructors, and to participate in the group discussion were contradictory to their silent learning style and the teacher-directed methods they learned. Many participants had to renegotiate their identity, language, and voice in order to be recognized and heard in the U.S. classroom.

Knowles failed to discuss the role of contexts in his construction of andragogy, yet these studies suggest ways in which contexts function to shape the learners' views of themselves and their engagement in the learning process. It is through the constraints of the contexts that the learners are socialized to define their roles as students, to develop particular patterns of communication, to interact with others, and to relate to authority and power, all of which may not be culturally meaningful or understandable when being viewed by those outside these contexts. These studies; however, when contrasted with andragogy, render the contextual impact visible and present alternative ways of viewing adult learners.

Andragogy and Universality

Andragogy assumes that adults have the capacity to be self-directing and responsible for their own learning, apart from their sociocultural contexts. Such a premise unfortunately leads to a faulty assumption that the learners' characteristics highlighted in andragogy could and should be applicable to all adult learners. Such an error of reasoning is called universality.

The issue of universality has not been unusual within the field of adult education. It is the perspective that regards a particular group as

the only or the most important one, whose views can represent the experience of the entire population (Flannery 1994). In the case of andragogy, the characteristics of being self-directed and internally motivated were generalized to represent attributes of adult learners, despite the fact that many marginalized groups, including people of color and immigrants, may be discouraged from manifesting these attributes (Alfred 2003; Flowers in this volume; Hvitfeldt 1986; Lee 1999; Marcano 2001; Pratt 1991).

The power relationship embedded in academe is evidenced by universality. Researchers who make the error of universality are often situated in privileged positions. Such positions usually prevent these enfranchised individuals from viewing alternative realities to their own, nor are they aware that their perspectives reflect only the specific, hegemonic discourse in which they are engaged. Their particular view, reality, and experiences are extrapolated to represent the experiences of all adults. That is why we have seen "adult development" models (Erikson 1982; Levinson 1986) and "adult participation" studies (London, Wenkert, and Hagstrom 1963, cited in Flannery 1994) based on the all-male sample, excluding women of all races.

Knowles proposed andragogy in part because he was dissatisfied with the educational and psychological studies in the 1960s, which primarily used children and animals as research samples. Knowles conducted studies involving "adult samples" (Knowles and Associates 1984). The adults from whom he drew andragogical assumptions, however, were overrepresented by privileged individuals, who were primarily Wwhite, male, educated, and from middle-class backgrounds—a population that was not unlike himself. When Knowles overgeneralized the characteristics of this population and claimed these as attributes of adult learners, he reinforced the entitlement of this particular group and silenced those were less privileged, whose values and experiences were often ignored in educational settings. Andragogy is, unfortunately, another example of universality, more reflective of the values of privileged individuals rather than the experiences of most adults.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide a critical analysis of andragogy by proposing a more contextualized way of viewing adult learning process based on the experiences of adult immigrant learners. This chapter first critiqued the lack of discussion on the role of context in andragogy. Then it provided a brief review of empirical studies, focusing on the ways in which adult immigrants' contexts may affect their learning experiences in the United States. These studies also illustrated that andragogical assumptions do not characterize the experiences of some adult immigrants. Moreover, andragogy was found to be guilty of universality. By overgeneralizing the characteristics of a particular group of learners as those of all adult learners, Knowles effectively silenced and marginalized various social groups, including the adult immigrant learners whose values, experiences, and realities do not likely resemble the discourse of the dominant population.

It is critical for adult educators to be aware of the significance of contexts in shaping people's beliefs, ideas, and experiences. Adult immigrant learners represent a rapidly growing population from various parts of the world. Although often categorized as one group due to their common immigration status, adult immigrants bring to their learning settings a wide range of beliefs, values, role expectations, and ways of communication, which may vary from the dominant U.S. culture in different degrees. Even though we are often trained to view our students through andragogical lenses, adult educators need to be culturally sensitive to the contextual impact on the learning process and acknowledge the various types of learning engagement that adult immigrants manifest. As adult educators, we need to examine both our own and our learners' assumptions about self, learning, and teaching in order to facilitate the learning process more effectively for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Transformative Learning:
Fundamental Concepts

by
Lisa M. Baumgartner

Metamorphosis. Reformation. Conversion. These words suggest transformation. Images of transformation include caterpillars changing into butterflies or religious conversion experiences. Perhaps because of the profound changes evident in people, interest in transformative learning continues to grow. The ERIC database contains over 330 documents on transformative learning. In addition, educators enjoy materials concerning fostering transformative learning in the classroom (Cranton 1994, 1996, 2002; Taylor 2000).

This chapter discusses how transformative learning differs from informational learning. Next, three philosophically different approaches to transformative learning are briefly delineated. Since Mezirow's theory has received the bulk of attention in the adult education literature over the past 25 years, his philosophical approach, a detailed explanation of his 10-step model as well and support and criticisms of his model follow. The topic of fostering transformative learning in the classroom completes the chapter.

Learning for Transformation versus Learning for Information

Marjorie, a mother of two, was an ambitious real estate agent and part-time tennis coach at the local high school. At age 35, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. After coping with her initial shock and sadness, Marjorie researched her treatment options at the library and found information on treating side effects of chemotherapy. She joined an online support group and spoke with health professionals about her treatment alternatives. Prior to diagnosis, Marjorie's goals included buying a larger house, becoming the most successful realtor in the region, and purchasing an expensive car. After diagnosis, Marjorie changed her priorities from valuing material possessions to valuing relationships and helping others.

Marjorie's treatment option research demonstrates "informational learning" (Kegan 2000, p. 48), which changes "*what* we know" (emphasis in the original) (p. 49). People add to the information they have about a subject. For example, Marjorie knew some of the side effects of chemotherapy but through additional research, she uncovered treatments for these side effects.

Conversely, transformative learning is "a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world" (Morrell and O'Connor 2002, p. xviii). Prior to being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, Marjorie appeared to be pursuing material success. After diagnosis, helping others became paramount. Consequently, her "way of being in the world" changed (p. xviii). Transformative learning "changes...*how* we know" (Kegan 2000, emphasis in the original, p. 49). It leads to a "more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective" (Mezirow 1991, p. 14).

Philosophical Approaches to Transformative Learning

Although theorists agree that transformative learning changes the way people think about themselves and the world each theorist examines transformative learning through a different lens. Dirkx (1998) examines transformative learning through four lenses: Daloz's developmental approach, Freire's emancipatory lens, Boyd's extrarational perspective and Mezirow's cognitive/rational approach. Daloz (1991), a college teacher and administrator, takes a developmental approach and recognizes that students are often in a developmental transition when they enter school and are trying to make sense of their lives. The transformative learning process is intuitive and involves students' minds, bodies, spirits, and social environments. The teacher helps students negotiate their transitions and changes in thinking.

Freire's (2000) emancipatory perspective underscores the importance of education for social change and liberation. Freire taught Brazilian workers to read by discussing social issues such as the poor compensation they received. Workers recognized how oppressive societal structures affected their compensation and they strove for social change.

The extrarational approach advanced by Boyd (1989) considers the emotional and soul-filled dimensions of transformational learning. Boyd draws from Jung's theory of individuation, which involves "becoming aware of the presence of the different selves operating within the psyche" through conscious and unconscious processes (Dirkx 2000, p. 1). Boyd (1989) says that a transformation leads to a more integrated self. People learn about different aspects of themselves through dreams, poetry, and drawing and work on integrating these subconscious aspects with their "conscious lives" (Dirkx 2000, p. 2) through a process of discernment that involves being open to receiving images and symbols from the unconscious, recognizing that they are valid, and grieving the loss of old ways of doing things while establishing new ways and integrating both old and new ways of doing things (Boyd and Myers 1988; Imel 1998).

Transformative Learning: Mezirow's Model

In sharp contrast to Boyd's (1989) extrarational way of viewing transformational learning, Mezirow's (2000) cognitive/rational lens emphasizes reflection on previously held assumptions about the world to arrive at a new world view. Based on the experiences of women reentering higher education after a hiatus, Mezirow's 10-step transformational learning process emphasizes critically reflecting on beliefs and engaging in "reflective discourse" (Mezirow 2000, p. 11)—talking with others—in order to arrive at a perspective transformation or change in world view, which can occur gradually or suddenly. He theorizes that individual transformation leads to social transformation.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory is grounded in Habermas's (1984) communicative theory. Habermas says there are two different domains of learning. Instrumental learning involves problem solving by seeking "cause and effect relationships" (Taylor 1998, p. 5). Communicative learning involves learning what people mean when they communicate. This goes beyond understanding the words. It involves understanding the speaker's intentions, feelings, and assumptions (Mezirow 2000). When learners critically reflect on these assumptions, transformative learning occurs.

Mezirow's 10-Step Process to Perspective Transformation

Mezirow (2000) delineated a recursive 10-step process to perspective transformation. Marjorie's vignette will help illustrate the 10 steps. First, people experience a "disorienting dilemma" such as a diagnosis of a terminal illness or divorce (Mezirow 2000, p. 22). Marjorie's cancer diagnosis was her disorienting dilemma. Second, people experience "fear, anger, guilt, or shame" (p. 22). Marjorie felt shocked and sad. Third, individuals critically assess their assumptions about the world. Marjorie reexamined her primary focus on material gain and decided that helping others and spending more time with others was more important. Fourth, people realize others have gone through what they are feeling. Perhaps her interaction with an online support group helped her though this stage. Fifth, based on the revision of their old belief system, people explore "new roles, relationships, and actions" (p. 22). It is not clear whether Marjorie has experienced steps 5 through 10. In step 5, she could *explore* becoming a peer counselor at a cancer center. Sixth, people plan "a course of action" (p. 22). For example, Marjorie could decide to become a peer counselor and make a plan to achieve that goal. The seventh step is to gain the "knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans" (p. 22). As an example, Marjorie may attend peer counselor training at the cancer center. Next, she would "provisionally try on the new role" (p. 22) by becoming a peer counselor. This would lead to Step 9 where she would become more competent and confident

in this new role. The 10th is to "[reintegrate] into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (p. 22). Marjorie's new perspective becomes part of her.

The Lynchpins of TL: Experience, Critical Reflection, and Reflective Discourse

Experience, critical reflection, and reflective discourse are the main ingredients in the transformative learning process. Life provides the "stuff" or material for critical reflection (Taylor 1998). Critical reflection on previously held assumptions (as a result of having life experiences) can lead to a change in "frame of reference" or *world view* (Mezirow 2000, p. 16). Learning also occurs when individuals change their "*meaning schemes* which are 'sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments'" (p. 18). Alterations in meaning schemes and frames of reference can be dramatic or can occur slowly. Individuals' meaning schemes can continue to change without their world view being affected. For example, Marjorie may change her beliefs about balancing her need to care for herself and others, but her larger world view may not be affected. In short, learning can occur rather dramatically or slowly by gradual changes in beliefs that lead to a change in world view or by large, dramatic alterations in world view.

Third, people must engage in reflective discourse (Mezirow 2000). People must talk with each other in order to determine the truth of their perspectives. This process involves challenging each other's assumptions and building consensus (Mezirow 1996). Ideal characteristics for reflective discourse include having the necessary accurate information, being free from bias, and being able to fully participate and challenge each other in an atmosphere of acceptance, empathy, and caring (Mezirow 2000).

Mezirow's Model: Support and Criticism

Taylor (1998) reviewed over 40 studies on Mezirow's transformative learning theory and found several studies (Dewane 1993; Hunter 1980; Lytle 1989; Morgan 1987; Shurina-Egan 1985; Williams 1985) that generally supported Mezirow's model but "few of the studies provided actual data confirming each step" (pp. 39-40). For example, Shurina-Egan's (1985) dissertation, which uncovered "the learning process of an adult family member as (s)he experienced family therapy" (p. ii), confirmed the general phases of a disorienting dilemma: confronting new ideas, trying on new behaviors, and consolidating and integrating these new perspectives into one's life. Lytle's (1989) study investigated how closely 20 registered nurses returning to school for a bachelor's degree in nursing followed the 10-step process. She determined that 7 nurses completed all 10 steps but that 13 stalled at different points in the process (Lytle 1989).

Although Mezirow's theory is presented in a linear way, he maintains that the process is recursive in nature (Mezirow 1995, 2000). Taylor (2000) reviewed seven studies that supported this claim, including Coffman's study (1989) that looked at "what happens when a theological seminary enforces a policy of using inclusive language in all its endeavors (p. 49)" (cited in Taylor 2000, p. 290). Coffman found that people continued to "reassess [their] disorienting dilemma in relationship to [their] cultural norms" (Taylor 2000, p. 291). Dewane's (1993) consideration of learning in self-help groups also presented a recursive transformational learning process.

Mezirow (1991) maintains that the transformative learning process is irreversible. Two recent studies support this assertion. Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves (1998) investigated the meaning-making process of HIV-positive individuals and found that participants had experienced a perspective transformation. Two years later, the researchers returned and found that the perspective transformation had held and that

people had continued to have changes in meaning schemes (Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves, and Baumgartner 2000). Baumgartner (2002) returned almost 2 years later and confirmed that the perspective transformation continued to hold and that people continued to make changes in meaning schemes.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory has invited critique since its unveiling in 1978. Collard and Law (1989) question Mezirow's epistemological assumptions. They chronicle the development of Mezirow's epistemology from that of a more collective, social theory to one based on the individual. The authors indicate that Mezirow's shift from a more political analysis to an emphasis on the individual occurs because of Mezirow's selective reliance on Habermas's work, which makes the same shift. They see Habermas's work and Mezirow's theory as flawed because the theory does not espouse a "socio-political critique" (p. 105). This criticism of focusing on the individual at the expense of recognizing larger societal structures in the transformative learning process reappears.

Mezirow's inattention to the context and culture in which the learning takes place is another variation on Mezirow's lack of attention to the society's influence on the transformative learning process. (Clark and Wilson 1991; Taylor 1998, 2000). That is, factors such as the historical context in which the learning occurs and the learner's race, class, and gender are not recognized as affecting the transformative learning experience (Taylor 1998). Clark and Wilson (1991) state that Mezirow's theory of transformative learning came from data collected from *women* in the 1960s and 1970s, yet Mezirow decontextualizes the experience and fails to provide an analysis of gender or recognize the intersection of historical time with the women's experiences. Similarly, Caruth (2000), in his dissertation on the learning experiences of five African American men at the Million Man March, notes that transformative learning theory "focuses too much attention on individuals and not enough attention on racial group identity" (abstract from Dissertation Abstracts). In short, transformative learning, like andragogy, does not address the sociocultural context in which the learning occurs.

Power is part of the context in which people learn. Inglis (1997) asserts that empowerment and emancipation are two different things. Empowerment means that people find strategies to "exist within the existing system and structures of power" (p. 4) whereas emancipation involves "resisting and challenging structures of power" (p. 4). Inglis (1997) argues that Mezirow's theory focuses on individual empowerment leading to social change while it ignores the issue of emancipation. McDonald, Cervero, and Courtenay (1999) also confirm that the centrality of power is not acknowledged by Mezirow. In their study on transformative learning in the lives of ethical vegans, they discovered that American society's view of meat-eating as the norm affected vegans' transformative learning process.

Critics draw attention to Mezirow's overreliance on rationality with scant attention to the importance of feelings, intuition, and the nonrational in the transformative learning process. Several studies found that "critical reflection can begin only once emotions have been validated and worked through" (Taylor 2000, p. 303). For example, Coffman's (1989) study explored the "patterns of acceptance and feelings of resentment to change in familiar habits of language at a theological seminary" (cited in Taylor 1998, p. 70). She found that it was important to resolve feelings before engaging in critical reflection. Henderson's (2002) dissertation concerning how chief executive officers learned, confirmed that emotions affect critical reflection.

Fostering Transformative Learning

There is an increased interest in fostering transformative learning (Taylor 1998, 2000). A portion of this literature concerns *ideal conditions and practices* that promote transformative learning. According to Taylor (2000), teachers should be "trusting, empathetic, caring, authentic, sincere, and demonstrative of high integrity" (p. 313). They need to give feedback, assess themselves, and provide experiential learning opportunities for their students. Activities that "promote student autonomy, participation, and collaboration" foster transformative learning (Taylor 1998, p. 48). Students should be able to explore "alternative personal perspectives," and engage in "problem-posing and critical reflection" (p. 49).

Cranton (1994, 1996) discusses *how* to foster transformative learning. She encourages teachers to make learners aware of their "psychological type" because unique psychological types learn and respond differently to activities (Cranton 2000, p. 199). Cranton states, "Case studies, debates, critical questioning, and analyses of theoretical perspectives" promote transformative learning in those who enjoy logic—the "thinking" type of personality (p. 199). Those who dislike confrontation and conflict may need to be placed in "harmonious groups" to discuss alternative viewpoints rather than engage in debate (ibid.). Similarly, intuitive learners will enjoy games involving imagination and brainstorming whereas field trips and simulations will appeal to the experiential learner (ibid.).

Cranton (2002) advises that teachers "[create] an activating event which may be a film, short story, or drawing which exposes ideas from more than one point of view" (p. 67). She advocates that learners write an autobiography that can focus on one aspect of their lives or their entire lives. Teachers can then ask students to reflect on learners' assumptions. Similarly, examining metaphors can help in the deconstruction of assumptions. Cranton explains that listing metaphors for "summer school" such as "a prison, a zoo, a cave...[and asking] 'What are the characteristics of a prison that are also the characteristics of a summer school?'" allows people to examine their assumptions (p. 67). Cranton (2002) believes in using "critical incidents" to foster critical reflection (p. 68). Learners examine a good or bad experience to reveal their assumptions and analyze the incident. Self-reflective journals are also helpful in having people engage in critical reflection.

Conclusion

Transformative learning changes how individuals know and experience the world. Theorists have used different lenses to conceptualize the transformative learning process including Daloz's developmental approach, Freire's emphasis on education for social transformation, Boyd's extrarational approach and Mezirow's cognitive approach to transformative learning. Research supports aspects of his 10-step process as well as his claims that the process is recursive and that people's perspective transformations are lifelong.

It is important to know that transformative learning theory can be viewed through several lenses. Readers should reflect on the criticisms (especially its lack of attention to the cultural context), the accuracy of Mezirow's 10-step process, and its application to various situations. Only through continued analysis can this theory expand.

Self-Directed Learning:
A Goal, Process, and Personal Attribute

by
Lisa M. Baumgartner

Tom, a 45-year-old high school history teacher wants to improve his Spanish language ability. He plans to go to Mexico in 6 months on a 2-week vacation. Tom remembers little of the Spanish he learned in high school. Tom enjoys learning things on his own and is curious about many things. He likes setting and achieving his own goals. Most often, he finds his own resources to accomplish these goals but occasionally he needs guidance from others.

He recognizes that he does not have enough time to become fluent in Spanish. He wants to learn what he calls "Tourist Spanish," which includes learning how to ask and understand responses to questions concerning directions, time, prices, ordering food in restaurants, and making polite conversation about the weather. Tom purchases books and tapes that suit his needs but soon realizes that he needs to practice Spanish with other people in order to truly understand it. He decides to enroll in a 10-week Beginning Spanish course at Open U—a community organization that offers night classes. Tom is engaged in a self-directed learning project. His process is clear. He has set a goal, made steps toward that goal, and adjusted his plan by attending a course at Open U.

Like andragogy and transformative learning, self-directed learning theory (SDL) has generated much research and discussion in adult education. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of SDL. Readers will learn about the three definitions of SDL, its philosophical underpinnings, and the goals and models of SDL in addition to criticisms of the theory.

Ivy-league schools as well as the public promoted self-directed learning before the term became fashionable. Rose (1997) notes that the Yale Report of 1828 recommended that college graduates should learn "the skills necessary to continue learning throughout life" (p. 15). Development of the mind was thought best accomplished through drills and recitations. Greek and Latin were considered the best subjects to accomplish this goal (ibid.). Like Yale, Harvard administrators and professors believed that "all real education was self-education" (p. 19). Self-education, which was equated with self-improvement, became a lifelong goal in the 1800s. Resources for self-improvement were plentiful. Clubs such as the "Book-of-the-Month Club" assisted individuals in their desire for self-improvement (ibid.). This focus on self-culture waned in the 1920s and instead became "tied...to the concept of control over learning" and learners began to gravitate toward learning that involved self-instruction (ibid.).

Although people engaged in self-directed learning, it was not a focus of inquiry in adult education until the 1960s. Lindeman (1989) mentioned that adults needed to direct their own learning. Tough (1971) built on the work of Houle's (1961) typology of adult learners. Tough interviewed 66 Canadians and discovered that adults spend up to 700 hours working on learning projects. In 1975, Knowles described how learning contracts aid the self-directed learning process. An explosion of research on the topic yielded several definitions of SDL.

Definitions of SDL

Self-directed learning has three definitions. The first approach examines the *goals* of self-directed learning: "(1) to enhance the ability of adult learners to be self-directed in their learning, (2) to foster transformational learning as central to self-directed learning, and (3) to promote emancipatory learning and social action as an integral part of self-directed learning" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 290). Second, SDL is defined as a *process* "in which people take the primary initiative for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences" (p. 293). Third, SDL can be seen as a "*personal attribute*" (p. 305). Guglielmino (1977) and Oddi (1986) created self-directed learning readiness scales to measure the "internal state of psychological readiness to undertake self-directed learning" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 307). Guglielmino (1997) associates a person's persistence in learning, learning enjoyment, curiosity, and goal orienta-

tion to be among the factors associated with SDL readiness. Their scales are explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

The vignette about Tom exemplifies the *process* of self-directed learning in that he has planned and is carrying out a self-directed learning project. Tom demonstrates self-directed learning as a *personal attribute* because he is curious, goal oriented, and persistent.

Philosophical Underpinnings of SDL

Before the goals and models of SDL are presented, readers should understand its philosophical underpinnings. Humanism is the primary philosophical underpinning of SDL (Caffarella 1993). Humanists believe that the learner's needs come first and that the teacher serves as a learner's guide rather than a subject/content expert (ibid.). They consider learner development extremely important. People are seen as self-directed individuals who strive to reach their full potential.

Behaviorism and neobehaviorism also undergird SDL. As noted in the introduction, behaviorists believe that learning occurs when people respond to stimuli and receive positive or negative reinforcement. Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) indicate that skill-based instructional techniques such as the self-modification of behavior are based in behaviorism. Neobehaviorists strive for internalized reinforcement so learning is its own reward (Kramlinger and Huberty 1990). Company training often follows this model in that employees are given learning packets to learn new job skills without a human instructor (Piskurich 1993). The employer determines the job skills needed and the employee learns the skills from a program at her/his own pace. For example, if employees at a large catalog-order store need to learn a new computer program, they use computer-assisted instruction. They read information about the computer program and are tested on material throughout their learning session. Employees receive positive messages such as "Nice Work!" when they respond correctly to a test question.

The critical perspective on SDL is a relatively recent. This perspective concentrates on bringing about social change through the "questioning of assumptions held by learners about the work in which they live and work" (Caffarella 1993, p. 27). Critical questioning combined with action leads to social change. Through this process of critical reflection and action, people recognize that the world in which they live shapes how they learn (ibid.).

The Three Goals of Self-Directed Learning

Clearly, the goals of SDL depend on the theoretical orientation from which it is approached (Merriam 2001). (See Brockett and Hiemstra 1991 and Tough 1971.) Humanists believe that the goal of SDL is to have the individual reach her/his full potential (Caffarella 1993). Behaviorists view self-directed learning as a means to acquire new information where positive or negative reinforcement leads to new behavior. Critical theorists see self-directed learning as leading to social change. For example, humanists may want Tom's self-directed learning to lead to spiritual, social, and intellectual growth. Behaviorists may expect Tom to respond correctly to stimuli from the environment appropriately. For example, when presented a menu, Tom would successfully order a meal. Critical theorists want Tom to question his assumptions about the world with the hope for social action.

The first goal (from a humanist perspective) is to enhance learners' ability to become more self-directed (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Increased independence, personal choice, and free will are part of the humanist philosophy (ibid.). Behaviorists and critical theorists would disagree with this goal.

A second goal of SDL is to foster transformative learning (Merriam 2001). Readers may recog-

nize the link between transformative learning and self-directed learning. Both types of learning acknowledge critical reflection and autonomy as central to their theories (Mezirow 1985). Perhaps Tom's classroom Spanish instructor discusses how the income disparity between the rich and the poor in Mexico compares to the United States. Later, Tom critically reflects on this information and changes his beliefs about the living conditions of the poor in both countries.

Third, SDL promotes emancipatory learning and social action (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Self-directed learning supports and challenges the status quo. Further, SDL's emphasis on learners' control over their learning including their resources and the methods used for learning is also found in emancipatory education (Brookfield 1993). Our self-directed learner, Tom, may engage in emancipatory SDL. He may recognize that the conditions of the poor in both countries result from a variety of factors. Tom may copy Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School model. He may venture into his community and bring people together to discuss community-based social justice issues. Members may pick an issue, devise a plan, and take action on their concerns (Horton 1990).

Models of Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning has several definitions as noted earlier. It is a process, a goal, and a personal attribute of a learner. Scholars created models that address one or more of these definitions. [See Owen's (2002) literature review of self-directed learning for more details.] Self-directed learning models fall into three categories: sequential, interwoven, and instructional models. The sequential models delineate steps in the self-directed learning *process* (Knowles 1975; Tough 1971) whereas the interwoven models (Brockett and Hiemstra 1991; Danis 1992; Garrison 1997; Spear 1988) examine *learner characteristics* such as the learner's personality in addition to the learning context, which "interact to form episodes of self-directed learning" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 295). Instructional models (Grow 1991, 1994; Hammond and Collins 1991) represent "frameworks that instructors in formal settings...use to integrate self-directed methods of learning in to their programs and activities" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 302). For example, Grow (1991) divides learners' ability for self-direction into four stages and suggests instructional strategies for each level of self-direction. An example of each type of model follows.

Tough's Sequential Model of SDL

Tough (1971) delineates 13 steps in the self-directed learning project. This model shows one version of the way individuals go about planning and executing a self-directed learning project. The steps tease out the "what, where, and how" of self-directed learning. For example, Tough's steps include deciding what to learn, where to learn, and when to begin the learning process (ibid.). In addition, Tough suggests setting deadlines, getting the proper resources, finding the time to learn, and increasing motivation to learn, if necessary.

Tom, the high school history teacher, followed some of these steps. He decided what to learn ("Tourist Spanish"), where to learn (at his home and Open U), and how to learn (via books and classes). Tom's deadline is 6 months away. He obtained the proper resources and found the time to learn. Perhaps Tom will implement a plan to maintain motivation at a later date. Currently, he is highly motivated.

Brockett and Hiemstra's Interwoven Model

Brockett and Hiemstra's (1991) Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model contains four components. First, they recognize that learners must take *personal responsibility* for the teaching-learning transaction and that personal responsibility must be a characteristic of the learner. Second is the idea of *self-directed learning*, which they view as an instructional method "that centers on the activities of plan-

ning, implementing, and evaluating learning" (p. 28). The third part of the model is *learner self-direction*. These are learner characteristics that "predispose [the learner] toward taking primary responsibility for personal learning endeavors" (p. 29). For example, self-directed learners may be more inclined to want to reach their full potential (Maslow 1970). They are more accepting of others, are highly ethical, can cope with ambiguous situations, and are highly creative (Maslow 1970). Fourth, the link between self-directed learning and learner self-direction is important. Brockett and Hiemstra believe that the best self-directed learning occurs when the learner's *need* for self-direction is matched with the *opportunity* for self-directed learning (ibid.) Last, Brockett and Hiemstra recognize that the learning activities and the learner exist in a social context that affects the learning process and the learner.

Grow's Instructional Model

As previously stated, Grow's (1991) four-stage model helps teachers instruct learners who are at different levels of self-direction. Grow's model contains four stages. Stage 1 learners are low in self-direction and rely heavily on the teacher for guidance. They enjoy lectures, drills, and tutoring. Teachers act as coaches, providing insight and developing learners' insight by helping them set goals and encouraging them to find out about themselves.

Those at stage 2 have moderate self-direction and are interested in learning. Teachers act as motivators. These students can become increasingly self-directed when initially given praise (an external motivator) and encouragement (Grow 1991). Inspiring lectures and structured activities where learners receive praise are two types of activities that Stage 2 learners enjoy. Ample personal interaction and "a strong focus on subject matter" please these students (Grow 1991, p. 132).

Intermediate self-direction typifies Stage 3 learners. They are active learners but they need a guide. Teachers facilitate the learning process by offering resources and methods of gaining knowledge while sharing decision making regarding learning goals and evaluation. Activities may include seminars and "group projects progressing from structured assignments with criteria checklists to open-ended, student-developed group projects formed without close supervision" (Grow 1991, p. 135).

Stage 4 learners are high in self-direction. They consult experts but "are both able and willing to take responsibility for their learning, direction, and productivity" (Grow 1991, p. 134). Teachers of these students are learner focused. Teachers often delegate tasks such as evaluation and assignments to the learner and may ask the learner to set up a timetable for accomplishing such tasks. Internships, independent studies, and dissertations are examples of self-directed learning projects.

Scales of Self-Directed Learning Readiness

Scales of self-directed learning readiness measure self-directed learning as a personal attribute. Guglielmino (1977) developed an instrument to measure personality characteristics, attitudes, and abilities that are integral to self-directed learning readiness. This 41-item survey was later expanded to 58 items. Her Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) contains eight factors: enjoyment of learning; an independent self-concept; tolerance of risk, ambiguity, and complexity; creativity; belief that learning is a lifelong, beneficial process; initiative; self-understanding; and self-responsibility for one's own learning (Guglielmino and Guglielmino 1988). The instrument has been translated into numerous languages and used with a variety of populations including people in business and industry (ibid.).

Oddi (1986) created a scale that "focused on the personality characteristics of individuals whose learning behavior is characterized by initiative and persistence in learning over time through a variety of learning modes" (p. 98).

Oddi compiled a list of self-directed learner personality characteristics after consulting literature concerning SDL. These characteristics were grouped into three broad dimensions and thought to exist on a continuum. The first dimension was Proactive Drive/Reactive Drive (PD/RD). This dimension measured learner persistence in learning without external reinforcement (Oddi 1986). Generally, people scoring high on the Proactive Drive needed little external reinforcement and felt competent and confident in initiating and completing a learning project. The second dimension was cognitive openness versus defensiveness. In other words, were people open to new ideas? Could they adapt to change and tolerate ambiguity or were they rigid and fearful of new ideas? The last dimension measured one's commitment to learning or apathy or aversion to learning. Oddi's (1986) Continuing Learning Inventory contains 24 survey items related to the three categories. These items are on a seven-point scale so people can tell how close they are to one end of the continuum or the other on a particular personality characteristic.

Criticisms of SDL

Like transformative learning theory and andragogy, self-directed learning receives criticism for reflecting White, Western values of independence and autonomy and ignoring other sociocultural contexts and values (Brookfield, 1993; Rowland and Volet 1996). Tsang, Paterson, and Packer (2002) note that Western cultures promote autonomy and individuality whereas Chinese culture champions the group above individuals. The cultural difference has an impact on learning (ibid.). (See chapters three and seven for a closer examination of learners' sociocultural contexts.)

Tsang, Paterson, and Packer surveyed Chinese teachers at Hong Kong Polytechnic University after they attended a workshop that introduced the rationale behind SDL and how learning contracts were used to enhance SDL. Workshop participants practiced writing contracts and later used learning contracts in their courses. Teachers reported that students' learning contracts looked virtually identical and they tended to write easily achievable objectives. Tsang, Paterson, and Packer reasoned that the collective nature of Chinese culture and the exam-based nature of Chinese schooling were responsible for these findings and urged teachers to recognize the cultural differences that may affect SDL and the creation of learning contracts.

The attention to the individual over the collective is echoed by O'Mahoney and Moss (1996). They indicate that SDL is a collective process and cite Freire's work with illiterate workers as an example. Their study of British Open Learning centers also revealed that learning was a collaborative process. Learners talked with tutors, joined groups, and developed a "collective self-direction" (p. 30).

Conclusion

People have engaged in self-directed learning for ages. However, the systematic study of self-directed learning in adult education began with the work of Houle (1961), Tough (1971), and Knowles (1975). Research on SDL provided three definitions for the term including SDL as a goal, process, and learner characteristic (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). In addition, three goals of SDL emerged from the literature. The first goal was to help learners become more self-directed (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Second, SDL sought to foster transformative learning and third to "promote emancipatory learning and social action" (p. 290).

Self-directed learning models spoke to the process of SDL (Tough 1971), learner characteristics (Brockett and Hiemstra 1991), and models of instruction (Grow 1991). Last, criticisms echoed those of andragogy. SDL's White, Western values of individuality and autonomy leave communal cultures wondering, "How does this apply to us?"

Critical and Postmodern Challenges for Education

by
Susan Birden

Theorists who study education have traditionally seen the educational process comprised of three key elements: learning, teaching, and curriculum. Psychology and learning theory tends to focus on the first of those elements, learning. However, for a host of philosophers and educational theorists, the questions that have most interested them concern teaching and curriculum and how learning is influenced by changes made in teaching and curriculum. The influence of postmodern theory and critical theory upon adult learning, therefore, has been enormous, but less direct than that of learning theorists like Mezirow or Knowles, for example. Postmodern and critical philosophers have sought to answer questions that are nevertheless key to the educational process such as: Can knowledge be measured using objective standards or is some knowledge unquantifiable? Should education develop the individual potentials of students or should it aim at ensuring that all students know standard information? Should all students be exposed to the perspectives and contributions of many cultures or should students first master concepts in their own tradition? Should education aim at presenting a neutral, objective account of historical events or should it give accounts that represent diverse perspectives? Who should make these decisions?

These are a few of the controversial questions that have concerned advocates of modernism, critical theory, and postmodern thought. How, then, would adherence to these various philosophical perspectives influence one's answers to these questions? What is it that makes one approach modern and another postmodern? Critical or noncritical? How have these debates played out in the education arena? What follows is a discussion about the relationship among these various philosophical approaches and how they influence contemporary educational debates, which, in turn, influence the questions we ask about learning.

The Grand Narratives of Modernism

Modern philosophy began with Rene Descartes's (1596-1650) search for a secure foundation for all knowledge. He claimed that his famous "Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") emerged after he subjected all of his beliefs (those derived from custom, religion, common sense, authority, sense perception, mathematics, etc.) to radical doubt. Descartes concluded that if one is not influenced by tradition, superstition, imagination, or emotion, the individual rational mind can think objectively and come to know truths that are universal and objective (Code 1991).

Modernism, then, is marked by "metanarratives," or Grand Narratives, that are associated with objectivity, universality, and truth: a belief in the progressive emancipation of all humanity from ignorance, disease, backwardness, and despotism; the progressive or revolutionary emancipation of labor; and the enrichment of humanity through the progress of capitalist techno-science (Lyotard 1992). These ideals inspired the revolutionary movements of the Enlightenment as well as the dramatic advances in the sciences, technologies, the arts, and politics. Education's role was immense for modernism was to produce not only happy people, but also enlightened citizens who could become masters of their own destiny. In the Grand Narratives of modernism, the goal, even if it remains beyond reach, is universal freedom, the fulfillment of all humanity (ibid.).

Critical Theory's Rejoinder

The ideals of the Grand Narratives faced their first serious critiques in Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's indictment of capitalist exploitation of labor. The critical theorists who followed them took aim at the noncritical social theories spawned as a result of belief in the ideals of modernism.

What is the difference between critical and noncritical theory? Noncritical theory describes social conditions and the relations between conflicting ideas. It explains how social realities came to be and how they can be understood. Critical theory, broadly defined, is any theory that not only explains how social realities came to exist, but also criticizes practices and beliefs that allow the persistence of conditions contrary to the Grand Narrative ideals of freedom, reason, and prosperity (Bowman 1995).

The group of philosophers most often associated with the term "critical theory" came into prominence in the pre-World War II years in Weimar, Germany. (They are also known as the Frankfurt School because of the theoretical and empirical work conducted at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany.) This eminent group included such disparate thinkers as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and later, Jürgen Habermas. Their work brought together Western philosophy, Marxism, and social theory with the goal of transforming society and ending all forms of domination.

The critical theorists were troubled by the increasing influence of monopoly capitalism, the rise of Nazism, and the socialism of the Soviet Union. They began asking fundamental questions about how social change occurs, the role of reason in modern society, and the connections between theory and practice. Although there was no unanimity among the critical theorists, they all shared a commitment to systematic critique of modernity and remained committed to many of the ideals of the Grand Narratives, including reason, freedom, and truth. They wanted to rehabilitate those ideals in order to create a more just and democratic society (Kohli 1996).

Although each of these critical theorists made important contributions to philosophical thought, the work of Jürgen Habermas has been the most widely used in adult education circles. He aimed at helping people gain self-understanding that would lead to their emancipation from domination. In particular, he wanted to create opportunities for social dialogue, what he called "ideal speech" situations. The speakers in these ideal speech situations would be characterized by self-reflection, reciprocity, and autonomy (Habermas 1968).

The concept of ideal speech situations led Habermas (1968) to the development of what he called "communicative ethics." This communicative ethic is to function as a regulative ideal to guide the establishment of a just society and to make individual participants accountable to the agreements and commitments they have made in conversation with their peers. Participants come to consensus through the force of the better argument, which Habermas argued was key for democratic participation in society.

Educational theorists have drawn upon critical theory, therefore, not to further learning theory, but to ask broader questions about the perceived failings of the educational system. Paulo Freire (1994, 1995), the renowned Brazilian educator, had an enormous impact on adult education theory by developing a critical pedagogy that advocated the radical notion of teaching adults to critique society while simultaneously teaching them to read and write. Maxine Greene (1973) and Henry Giroux (1988), among others, applied Habermas's theory of knowledge and interests and his critique of technical rationality, to schooling in powerful ways. Robert Young (1992) appropriated Habermas's critical discourse theory to classroom interaction between teachers and students. Finally, Jack Mezirow (2000) appealed to Habermas's communicative ethic in theorizing transformational learning, which was discussed in an earlier chapter.

Critical theory in general, and Habermas in specific, have not been immune to critique. Feminist theorists Seyla Benhabib (1986, 1992), Iris Marion Young (1990), and Sharon Welch (1990, 2000) have cited his lack of attention to difference. They argue that Habermas does not take into account the effects of race and gender on the power differentials in communicative situations and contend that the existence of racism, sexism, classism, and other institutional-

ized inequalities exert such pressures on communicative situations that they will always be fraught with opportunities for the more powerful to impose their will upon the less powerful. This critique has prompted adult educational theorists to closely examine the power dynamics in the classroom (see Hayes and Colin 1994; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2000; Shore 2001).

The Challenges of Postmodern Thought

Many philosophers in the last half of the 20th century, so-called "postmodern" philosophers like Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Julia Kristeva, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Luce Irigaray, and Jacques Derrida have been highly skeptical about several of the ideals of the Grand Narratives of modernity. They challenged foundational concepts by suggesting that there are no universal truths and that individuals are not the autonomous, rational agents that modernity portrays humanity to be. They further dispute the notion that humanity is progressing toward freedom and truth.

Although there is no consistency among these postmodern philosophers, all use a "deconstructive" approach to analyze social norms and beliefs. This deconstruction demonstrates that many "truths" that appear to be natural, normal, universal, or given are in fact constructed through discourse, usually to the detriment of society's weakest citizens. For instance, Jacques Derrida (1978, 1991) shows how belief in universal and objective truth is actually identical with the experience of a dominant elite, mainly European Wwhite males. He claims that epistemological privilege, or the privilege of determining what knowledge is worthy of being known, follows the lines of sexual, racial, political, and economic privilege.

Just as Derrida worked to deconstruct the notion of universal truth, Michel Foucault's studies in psychiatry, medicine, and the social sciences deconstructed how "expert opinion" in those professional discourses has infiltrated and shaped human behavior. Foucault (1980) shows how human behavior and belief systems are constructed through internalization of norms. Self-controlling habits are instilled by societal norms in an individual, making the individual simultaneously more useful and more docile, habituated to external regulation, subjection, and self-improvement. Furthermore, the individual perceives self-controlling norms developed in professional disciplines as integral to his or her self-image.

Postmoderns have similarly attacked the notion of rationality. Both Foucault and Lyotard (1984) have suggested that "reason" is nothing more than a set of rules that a discourse must respect when it sets out to understand something. If the set of rules are not observed, knowledge is excluded. Furthermore, Lyotard suggests we are at a loss even to question the status of this set of rules. Are they given, natural, divine? Are they even necessary to knowledge? And if they are, is it within reason's power to deduce or even describe their creation? Foucault (1984) even suggested that reason is not an extrahistorical absolute, but a term that functions as an accolade.

Finally, the postmodern thinkers point to the unprecedented violence and barbarism of the 20th century as evidence of the failure of the ideals of modernity's Grand Narratives to achieve freedom for humanity. Lyotard (1992) argues that in the 20th century, it was not a lack of progress but technoscientific, economic, and political development that created the possibility of total war, totalitarianism, the growing gap between the wealthy and the impoverished, populacide, and general deculturation. According to postmoderns, the ideals of modernity have created the present crises. Furthermore, technology now is proceeding of its own accord, with a force that is independent of demands coming from human needs. On the contrary, human entities—whether social or

individual—are now destabilized by the results of development. Therefore, it is now impossible for technology to legitimate itself by promising emancipation of humanity as a whole (Lyotard 1992).

The Modern vs. Postmodern Educational Debates

The debate between modern and postmodern thought has resulted in bitter conflicts in education about curriculum and political correctness. Postmodern advocates of diversity, who follow the thinking of Derrida, Foucault, or Lyotard, for example, argue that all students should be exposed to perspectives and contributions of many cultures other than their own, both temporally and geographically. They should also become aware of the heterogeneity of their own societies and learn not just to tolerate, but also to value differences of race, ethnicity, class, sex, and sexual orientation. The ideal of "multicultural literacy" challenges the modernist assumptions that the perspectives of historically dominant groups are superior or objectively true. It is also viewed as an important counterweight to the natural human tendency to fear differences, given that students must learn to live and work in a rapidly changing world.

Critics of postmodernism, like Allan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch, are outraged at what they see to be the politicization of education. Bloom's ***The Closing of the American Mind*** (1987) argues that women's studies, African American studies, and other attempts to diversify the mainstream curriculum have resulted in lowering of standards and the corruption of the ideal of objective Truth. Hirsch's ***Cultural Literacy*** (1987) insists that students need to master basic concepts in their own tradition before being exposed to other cultures. Postmoderns maintain that all education is political, whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged.

Conclusion

Once understood, the philosophical roots of questions about quantifiability and objectivity of knowledge become readily apparent in debates about standardized testing, "Back to Basics," and required multicultural education courses in college. These issues are likely to dominate educational discussions for the foreseeable future. Modernists defend the existence of objective standards of quality to guide choices about course requirements and ethics. Still, they have not succeeded in developing educational principles or programs that command universal agreement. Postmodern thinkers argue that students should be taught not to depend upon fictional ideals of objectivity. Unfortunately, the deconstructive nature of postmodern thought is unlikely to produce a comprehensive postmodern philosophy of education (Nicholson 1990). Furthermore, because of the nature of postmodern thinking, which is a method of critique, it has been hard to appropriate for the purposes of education.

However, the ongoing debates of theorists and philosophers are settled, at least temporarily, in the classroom of each adult education practitioner. The practitioner's choices will ultimately rest in many cases on how he or she answers the questions with which this chapter began.

An Afrocentric View
of Adult Learning Theory

by
Doris Flowers

My mother often spoke of education in our house and its importance to our future and to that of African American people. She would tell of her own educational experiences growing up in a segregated south where Jim Crow was law and African American children were put to work in the fields just as adults were. This work often delayed the education of most young African American children and sometimes even prevented them from ever attending school. As a result of fieldwork and an oppressive society, my mother's education was delayed and halted at various times. This meant that when she did return to school, she was with a different class and much older than her classmates. She however, was determined to learn and pursue her education. Her willpower and faith in God allowed her to prevail, for she would later enter Livingstone College at the age of 23.

Like my mother, most Africans believed and believe that the pursuit of freedom could be found in education. The idea that knowledge and "know how" were key to shaping a new life experience for a race of people who had been enslaved and continuously oppressed was very real. It seems that for our ancestors, obtaining an education would provide them with an equal opportunity in this land in which they had once dared to dream of any real opportunities. This is my mother's story and our ancestors' stories which have so much significance in our understanding of ourselves, knowledge generation and the contributions that race has made to meaning making and the learning development of African Americans.

How Slavery Informed the Learning Process for African Americans

Historically and as alluded to in the scenario above, African Americans have had a unique experience in the United States that has been oppressive and discriminatory and has excluded them from many of the freedoms afforded those who were White. The system of slavery denied African people their basic human rights. This process of dehumanization occurred over time and therefore became an institution that the United States of America sanctioned for well over 200 years.

The system of slavery is critical to understanding the learning of African Americans for it has provided the basis for the construction of different ways of knowing. This becomes apparent when we examine the language, beliefs, culture, religion, morals, and learning systems and process of African American people. We can trace their deep structures back to African Tradition (Asante 1988). The system of slavery facilitated a transformation within the African American culture that forced Africans to think and do differently with not only what they knew but what new knowledge had developed. The African tradition was innate and instinctive. However, the new learning that was conceptualized out of a need to survive was well organized and thought out. When the two were integrated, new learning and knowledge was created. It was in the struggle of an oppressive society that progress in education was made.

The Jeanes Supervisors and Teachers were a perfect example of educational success born out of slavery. In the years after the Civil War, African Americans saw education as their ticket out of poverty and into the American dream. "In 1865 delegates to a Black church-sponsored convention in South Carolina urged that the state establish public schools throughout the state. The 1868 Constitution, written at the outset of Reconstruction, called for free public schools open to both Blacks and Whites" (Botsch 1998, online). States throughout the South made few efforts to help African Americans until the middle of the 20th century, although some private efforts were made. The Jeanes fund helped to begin a process of equalizing the educational system so that all students were provided with the assistance needed (ibid.). The Jeanes Supervisors provided educational assistance to Black schools and Black students all over the South.

Asante (1987, 1988) provides an overview of an African-centered perspective on learning and development. I believe that this perspective can be used to help adult educators gain a better understanding of the multiple ways learning occurs. More important, it introduces the concept of race and suggests that although race does not necessarily affect learning in a negative or positive way, it can contribute to understanding how learning occurs or is viewed when race becomes a variant. Additionally, this perspective offers us a way to discuss the ways in which race, gender, and class contribute to our perceptions and views on learning.

Although the literature on adult learning theory (Knowles 1980) has begun to reflect the ways in which sociocultural factors affect learning, the research and discourse on the ways in which race, gender, and class influence our perceptions about whether people can learn or how they learn has been limited. In fact, what Merriam and Caffarella (1999) do in their work is attempt to include within a sociocultural model of learning the importance that race and gender have to learning. African American scholars in the field (Colin 1994; Guy 1999; Johnson-Bailey 2002; Sheared 1994) have looked more critically at factors of race, class, and gender and have begun to examine their impact on learning within a cultural context. Although andragogy is the most popular theory of learning in adult education, it is not without criticism nor is it the only prevailing theory. However what Knowles (1980) does do is outline a basic frame from which to consider the learning differences of adults and children.

From Andragogy to Afrocentrism: Bridging the Gap

Unlike the theory of andragogy, Afrocentricity* is more inclusive of the sociohistorical, political, race, class, and gender contributions made in the learning development of African Americans. The Afrocentric model is a philosophical approach grounded in African tradition. In examining the framing of Afrocentricity, Asante (1987), Karenga (1987), and Welsh-Asante and Karenga (1985) outline six styles of argumentation used within the Afrocentric theory and praxis. They are Sankofan argumentation, Nommoic argumentation, Maatic argumentation, political intellectual argumentation, African collective memory-perception argumentation, and explicit locational argumentation. The purpose here is not to discount or discredit the theory of andragogy but to offer an alternative perspective as well as suggest that the culture and tradition of African Americans introduces another process of human knowledge that is grounded in one's cultural centeredness.

The first of the styles is "Sankofa," which is an Akan term meaning "return to the source; go and get it and bring it here." Sankofan argumentation is anchored in African history (Gray 2001).

> We have within our own history the most sacred and holiest places on the earth. Afrocentricity directs us to visit them and meditate on the power of our ancestors. Afrocentricity is the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history. It is our history, our mythology...During our reconstruction, we must not lose sight of our total Afrocentricity. It cannot develop further until we rid ourselves of all fantasies except those that grow out of our own history. (Asante 1988, pp. 4, 6, 7)

The second tenet, Nommo, is a word and a concept generating from the Dogon people that translates to "the word, the power of the word...the magical power of the word, the magical force of the spoken word" (Gray 2001, p. 29). In essence, an Afrocentric use of Nommoic argumentation is that "language is essentially the control of thought. It becomes impossible for us to direct our future until we control our language...If language is not functional, then it should have no place in our vocabulary. In every revolution, people have first seized the instruments of idea formation" (Asante 1988, pp. 31-32).

*Afrocentricity and Africentricity are synonymous. Terms are used here as the authors referenced used them.

The third tenet is Maatic argumentation. "Maat is a Kemetic concept with multiple, yet related meanings, including the following: 'truth, justice, harmony, righteousness, and balance'" (Gray 2001, p. 38). Maat is a divine and human expectation-requirement—a "law intrinsically incumbent upon all...that all persons are called by the Creator/the Neters-the angels/the Orishas-Loas-Ancestors/the Universe to function in an exemplary, ethical, moral, just manner at all times" (Gray 2001, p. 38).

The fourth tenet in Afrocentricity theory is political-intellectual argumentation. This tenet addresses either political and economic matters or matters of academic or scholarly honesty and integrity. Karenga (1987) states that economics is at the core of the African American struggle in the United States since it penetrates every aspect of social life.

The fifth tenet is African collective memory-perception. This term holds that African people share memory-perception. This suggests that African people are linked externally, relative to our shared historical-experiential journey (Gray 2001).

The sixth and final tenet is explicit locational argumentation (Asante 1987; Karenga 1987; Welsh-Asante and Karenga 1985). Location has to do with place relative to ideas, ideals, myth history, symbols, icons, and more (Asante 1987). Knowledge results from an encounter in place, which is a rightly shaped perspective that allows Afrocentrists to place African values and ideals at the center of their inquiry and explanation (ibid.).

As we further examine the African-centered model of learning, Colin (1998) introduces the term Africentricity. Colin and Guy (1998) define Africentrism as the "sociocultural and philosophical perspective that reflects the intellectual traditions of both a culture and a continent. It is grounded in the seven basic values embodied in the Swahili Nguzo Saba" [the seven core African values of Kwaanza] (p. 52). Similar to the six tenets defined by Asante, Karenga, and Welsh-Asante, Nguzo Saba uses principles that are entrenched within the African and African American community.

Afrocentricity in Adult Education

The impact of race, class and gender on learning in African Americans is enormous. It has not only informed the ways in which African Americans learn but also how they are taught. These factors of Afrocentricity help us to understand the learning process of African American adult learners.

In adult education, those who ground their research using an Afrocentric philosophy have found that race, class, and gender are critical in the learning process of African Americans. Colin (1994) examined the recruitment and retention of African American faculty and students and the exclusion of the Africentric perspective from curriculum content. Colin suggests that our academic institutions still suffer from institutional racism. Therefore, African Americans can never learn if they never gain access. Colin strongly concludes that if institutions of higher learning or other learning settings are going to work with African learners, then it is essential that they begin to hire and make spaces for educators of African ancestry who have a strong commitment to teaching and learning in the African-centered paradigm.

In her research on African American adult basic education (ABE) students, Sheared (1994) examines the roles of adult education with race and gender as critical factors. This Africentric Womanist perspective was "born of a direct response to the exclusion of the African American woman's voice from the discourse on race, gender, and class" (p. 30). Sheared states that this perspective acknowledges the both/and nondichotomous relationship that is prevalent and real for women of the African Diaspora. This perspective recognizes that each student brings a set of experiences to the learning space that is unique to her life, work, home, family, etc. These polyrhythmic realities reflect "the

wholeness...the uniqueness, and—most important—the connectedness of individuals to others in society, their both/and realities" (p. 31). Sheared concludes that in order for educators to meet the specific learning needs of their students (polyrhythmic realities), they would need to "give voice" to students' realities. By doing so they acknowledge the different realities and understand that there are different ways of interpreting reality.

Flowers and Sheared (1996) examined the ways in which race and one's lived experience has an impact on how African American learners made connections to subject matter and content in one adult basic education setting. The key factor in the students being able to make connections had to do with how well the teacher understood the lived experiences of the learners in question. Although this study does not speak specifically to the ways in which Afrocentrism is described by African scholars, it clearly rests within the African Sankofan argument. Just as the Sankofan perspective reflects on knowing one's tradition, the teacher in this study clearly had to understand the historical roots of the African students. This historical connection allowed the teacher to aid her students in understanding and learning the subject matter in the classroom.

Other researchers (Alfred 2003; Flowers and Sheared 1996, 1997; Guy 1999; Johnson-Bailey 2002) have used race, class, and gender as the lens through which to better understand the learning experiences of African American adult learners. Even though the authors do not all make the connection back to the African philosophical tenets as espoused by Sankofan and Maat, these studies do reflect a relationship to the African-centered paradigm.

Learning through the Lens of Afrocentrism

This new knowledge and/or ways of knowing of African Americans is termed Afrocentric in nature. This philosophical model rooted in African American and African Diaspora traditions and beliefs assumes that there is a specific cultural orientation that guides the learning and ways of knowing for African American learners. Many researchers (Asante 1987, 1988; Collins 2000; Nobles 1980, 2003) have studied and written on the ideas and assumptions that Afrocentricity is a valued system within the African Diaspora that shapes and informs learning. These traditions have significance in adult education in that they offer a different model of learning operating within a particular cultural and racial group. Afrocentric scholars seek to construct a philosophy and epistemology centered within our cultural reality.

According to Asante (1987, 1988), Afrocentrists believe that it is not about claiming African origins of ancient civilization. Asante posits that one must understand Afrocentricity as an empowering counterhegemonic philosophy, which questions epistemological considerations that are based in European cultural realities (the whole notion of objectivity or cultural neutrality is moot in this argument because the episteme is based on a western positivistic tradition). He goes on to say that Afrocentricism is an epistemological consideration; the Afrocentric discourse attempts to shift, construct, critique, and challenge the way of knowing or discerning knowledge from an epistemology engendered within a European cultural construct to one which is engendered or "centered" within an African or probably more correctly an African American cultural construct.

Collins (2000) proposes an Afrocentric feminist perspective on knowledge in African American women. Collins posits that Black societies reflect elements of a core African value system that existed prior to and independently of racial oppression. She further states that Black people have a common experience of oppression that they share and it is this consciousness that frames a distinctive Afrocentric epistemology.

From Theory to Practice: Touching the Spirit

Nobles (2000) has not only developed a conceptual framework of learning but has put the theory of Afrocentricity into operation. In 1989, Nobles' work was supported by California Department of Education and implemented within the San Francisco Bay area schools, particularly those that had predominantly African American students. The Center for Applied Cultural Studies and Educational Achievement was established and an African-centered curriculum was developed. The Nsaka Sunsum Education Process and Framework was created. According to Nobles (2001), "Nsaka Sunsum" is a West African (Twi language) term that means to connect with the spirit or essence of someone so deeply that an exalted feeling, thought, or action is aroused or animated within them. Nsaka Sunsum: Touching the Spirit is clearly a revolutionary educational process that realigns the education intent, method, practices and cultural applications in the service of maximizing students' educational potential. It boldly uses the best of African and African American culture in the achievement of educational excellence with African students (ibid.).

Conclusion: Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender in the Learning Development of African Americans

I began this chapter by telling my mother's story as it related to adult education. For it is here where I began to understand that education was not something taken for granted but it represented a ticket to freedom for African-Americans. Sankofan informs us that history, traditions, and spiritual connection to Africa and its ancestors are embedded in a way of knowing that is essential to learning. My mother's experience with education and her determination was shared with her children and other African American children. Her stories were not only filled with knowledge and wisdom but they strengthened our belief in ourselves as a people. Inasmuch as race and racism affected the education system of a time, it could not stop the new knowledge that was developing. Although we are now in a different time, education and learning seem still to be determined by race, class, and gender.

The direct connection with understanding one's African history is the support with which the foundation is anchored. The approach also ensures that all learning and teaching maintain integrity as it protects Afrocentric thought from all outside influences.

Just like my mother's story, research conducted by the African scholars in the field of adult education connotes that there is not only a cognitive relationship but also an affective or spiritual interconnection between what African scholars are writing about in terms of the Afrocentric paradigm. The African-centered paradigm speaks to more than a theoretical position. It speaks to a way of knowing grounded in making connections with one's history, race, and ancestors. To learn just for the sake learning is not enough. Learning is purposeful with a community goal as motivator. In my mother's case, education was freedom—freedom from a very segregated South that continued to oppress African American people.

Sheared (1994) proposed that the womanist perspective ideally frames our understanding of the polyrhythmic realities existing among adult learners. These polyrhythmic realities are a set of experiences that are unique to that person. The importance of taking race, class, language, and gender into consideration when attempting to understand the experiences of adult learning is critical. Sheared concluded that the teacher's understanding of race, class, gender, and language is essential to helping not only the learner but also the teacher in creating strategies for the learners.

Flowers and Sheared's (1996) study is another example of how the African-centered perspective pervades within the learning environment for African learners and research scholars. Just as the Nommoic argument of Afrocentricity denotes, language is an essential component of establishing one's position and framing ones argument. Flowers and Sheared study reflects how a common language in connection to one's history was used to strengthen the relationship between the teacher, learner, and subject matter. Moreover, the power of the word as in the Nommoic framework was evident in the ways in which students and teachers interacted when they communicated with one another.

Just as my mother's story and these research studies have shown, there is an African way of knowing and learning that should be acknowledged. Nobles' (2001) model of Afrocentric learning, "Nsaka Sunsum" (touching the spirit) is a critical ingredient to understanding how Afrocentrism can help adult educators reach African adult learners. To touch one's spirit requires that the teacher be grounded in understanding the student's history, language, culture, and lived experiences. In order to help the learner reach his or her potential in the learning environment, the teacher must make a connection to the affective and spiritual as well as cognitive domains. Nobles' work in this area has shown that when you touch a learner's spirit you unleash his or her true potential in the learning environment. The student is able to take control and become the facilitator of his own learning endeavors.

Although we talk about the significance of the teacher and how the teacher needs to be grounded in Afrocentricism, it is equally important to look at the role that learning institutions play in perpetuating the deficiency theory of intellectual ability of students of African ancestry. Just as race can be used to inform the adult educator with the development of new praxis, it is often the case that few African Americans enter the academy. This limited access is often due to racism. Colin (1994) points out in her research that institutionalized racism is very real and still serves as the gatekeeper for African Americans making entry into the educational system impossible for adult learners. She proposed that academic institutions need to examine policy and make changes that will begin to provide access for African American students. She believes that there needs to be a direct connection or relationship developed between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the traditional universities.

The Afrocentric perspective on adult learning theory provides a framework for understanding adult learners by taking into account the interconnections of race, class, and gender on the lived experience of the adult learner. Although race is used to perpetuate the myth that African Americans are deficient in their intellectual abilities, scholars of African ancestry in the field of adult education would regard race as integral to the understanding of how African students learn. In conclusion, adult educators committed to working with African/African American learners should and must begin to examine the Afrocentric paradigm if indeed they want to ensure that there is equity in our learning institutions so that all students learn and develop to their fullest potential in the classroom environment.

Adult Learning Theory:
What Does the Future Hold?

by
Lisa M. Baumgartner

The Future

In this monograph we have tried to provide basic information about foundational adult learning theories/perspectives including andragogy, transformative learning, self-directed learning, and critical and postmodern theories. Although we wanted to give readers "the basics," we also felt compelled to include marginalized voices in the critique of adult learning theory because not all learners do share the White, male, middle-class context from which these theories came.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to imagine what the future holds for these theories/perspectives. Will andragogy remain a useful set of assumptions for adult educators? Will transformative learning theory continue to evolve and create dialogue in the field? What is the future of self-directed learning, critical theory, and postmodern theory? Will learning theories that represent women, people of color, and other marginalized groups emerge and claim their space in adult learning theory?

One thing is certain. A single adult learning theory will never capture the complexities of adult learners (Merriam 2001). However, current theories will combine in ways that may more adequately capture the experiences, characteristics, and adults' ways of learning. Holton, Swanson, and Naquin's (2001) more complex model of andragogy may be the catalyst for more interest in broadening that set of assumptions. It seems andragogy is not an all-encompassing theory of adult learning but it still sparks debate and "constitutes one piece of the rich mosaic of adult learning" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, p. 278). Rachal's (2002) proposal for a researchable definition of andragogy may spark interest in resuming research on the effectiveness of using andragogy's assumptions in the classroom. Further, andragogy's application to children needs further investigation. Ultimately, we as educators must decide the importance of andragogy's assumptions in our professional lives. Are the assumptions applicable to Laura as well as Sarah? Do they apply to us? What disservice may we do learners by believing these assumptions? How can andragogy help us to be better teachers? What can we do to become more aware of the sociocultural contexts in which we and our students live? What can we do to recognize the impact of society on the teaching and learning transaction? Answers to these questions as well as others posed about andragogy will ultimately help us as teachers to understand our students and ourselves as learners.

Has transformative learning theory research reached its zenith? It is doubtful as there have been more than 30 dissertations discussing transformative learning since 2002. Research activity on transformative learning and its application in the classroom is high. Recommendations for further research include more quantitative studies about transformative learning, additional analysis of the components of the process, and continued work on fostering transformative learning in the classroom (Taylor 2000). Since spirituality appears to be an increasingly popular topic in adult education as evidenced by the numerous submissions to the Adult Education Research Conference in recent years, perhaps future research will combine spirituality and transformative learning.

The current fascination with transformative learning comes at a price, however. With more being written about transformative learning, will the concept eventually lose its specialness? Just as the term "counselor" is now used in venues beyond the human service fields of mental health and academic advisement to include consultants in other areas, will the definition of transformative learning gain more definitions? What will this mean for the field of adult education? Will the field become less enamored with this learning theory or will the theory continue to change with the times and remain a topic for discussion and critique? Only the future will tell. One thing is certain, the Marjories of the world will continue to grow and change and transform their world views.

Self-directed learning in the workplace will continue to be a topic of interest in the immediate future (Pollitt 2001). Perhaps the combination of increased technological capabilities, dwindling resources in certain sectors including education, and adults' continued interest in being in control of their own learning projects may lead to new directions in self-directed learning research. In addition, aging Baby-Boomers will start retiring, and increased interest in the application of these learning theories to those over 65 may occur. In addition, we as adult educators need to further investigate the role of community in the self-directed learning process as well as the sociocultural contexts in which self-directed learning occurs.

The use of critical learning theory seems to be on the rise. The 2003 proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference (Flowers et al. 2003) contain a myriad of topics that use critical learning theory. The future seems bright for critical and postmodern theory at the moment, and in the future suggestions from critical theorists may continue to inform other theories of adult learning theory. What is well known is that these theories will continue to drive research and practice well into the 21st century.

As we continue to become a more racially and ethnically diverse nation, we will need learning theories to acknowledge learners' diverse sociocultural context and their impact on the learning process. The authors of the theories discussed in this monograph may want to continue to address the role of learners' sociocultural context in adult learning. Further, theories that speak to the learning experiences of marginalized communities including people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and economically disadvantaged persons may continue to emerge. These perspectives need to come to the center of our discussions of adult learning theory and practice in order to serve our diverse populations of learners.

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